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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002424

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STATE FOR SA/FO (DAS JGASTRIGHT), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PB, S/CT,
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SUBJECT: PRT/TARIN KOWT - URUZGAN'S DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONS
- LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR GOVERNABILITY

REF: KABUL 2178

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Classified By: DCM RICHARD NORLAND FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Governor Monib, of Uruzgan Province in southern Afghanistan, has been on the job for two months and is still working to build up functioning institutions from the administrative rubble left behind by his incompetent and corrupt predecessor. Visits to Tarin Kowt in recent days by CSTC-A MG Durbin, CJTF-76 MG Freakley, and Canadian BG Fraser reinforced the messages that the international community stands ready to support him on security, reconstruction and reform, but expects him to strengthen his planning and decision-making processes in a number of ways. Monib got the message; he held the first Provincial Development Council meeting on May 22 and is also trying to improve the elected Provincial Council (PC). We expect the imminent arrival of a new Afghan National Police (ANP) unit - replacing the dysfunctional unit that recently dissolved in place - to improve the security picture and lead to the creation of a coordination center for security forces. In the meantime, former Governor Jan Mohammed Khan has returned again to Uruzgan and is actively working to undermine Monib. Monib is doing what he can, pushing hard on many fronts to gain legitimacy and drive back the insurgents, and he recognizes that an improved governing apparatus is a worthwhile investment. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) GENERALS DELIVER THE MESSAGE: After two months on the job, Abdul Hakim Monib is still striving to get traction as Governor of Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province in the face of manifold security challenges and limited resources (reftel). Last week MG Durbin, Commander of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, visited Tarin Kowt PRT, briefing on upcoming police reforms and pledging to support Uruzgan's under-manned and under-equipped security forces once they are reformed. PRT officials told him that the ANP force in Uruzgan has dissolved and its commander, Rozi Khan, is believed to be actively working against the GoA and Coalition Forces (CF). Durbin stated that a new ANP commander had been selected for Uruzgan and we have since learned that the new commander, Colonel Qassam, will arrive around May 23 bringing 100 new ANP police. (Note: As of May 26, Qassam and his 100 men remained in Kandahar, waiting for a secure way to travel to Uruzgan. End Note.) The unit's arrival is timely and will provide Governor Monib some much-needed reinforcements in securing, first Tarin Kowt town and then expanding his authority out into the districts. Per MG Durbin's request, the PRT will work closely with Monib and Col. Qassam to get a picture of Uruzgan's existing police infrastructure and equipment, and from that produce a forward-looking plan for ANP operations, including in lawless Gizab District, which was annexed to Uruzgan in early May. We are hearing rumors that Nesh District on Uruzgan's southern border may be annexed from Kandahar in early July to become Uruzgan's seventh district, further straining Monib's resources.

13. (C) Monib has advised us that in one of the province's hottest spots - the Chenartu region of Chora District - he is setting up a militia ("auxiliary police") unit of 100 men to fill the security vacuum. Currently there are no GoA security forces in the rugged Mirabad Valley-Chenartu area,

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and cargo and passenger vehicles are at grave risk of Taliban attacks and IED strikes. The militia is drawn primarily from tribal fighters in the area and Monib is financing them with funds he brought back from Kabul on May 12. While the militia is far from an ideal development, it is hard to dispute Monib's view that it is a better short-term solution to Chenartu's security crisis than leaving the Taliban in charge. Once the new ANP police unit is capable of securing Chenartu, we will work with Monib to demobilize the militia.

14. (C) On May 18, MG Freakley, Commander of Combined Joint Task Force 76, and Canadian BG Fraser, Commander of Regional Command South, met with Governor Monib in Tarin Kowt. The Governor laid out his security priorities (Tarin Kowt town; checkpoints along the Kandahar-Tarin Kowt road; checkpoints around district centers; vehicles, weapons, ammunition, and communications for police) and his reconstruction priorities (road access to all the district capitals, a power grid in Tarin Kowt). MG Freakley pledged to work with Monib on his reconstruction requests as long as they were channeled through and coordinated by Uruzgan's nascent Provincial Development Council (PDC). Separately, Monib plans to set up a Provincial Coordinating Council (PCC) for security affairs, but must wait for the new ANP chief to arrive before he can make that happen.

15. (C) PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL'S FIRST MEETING: On May 22, Governor Monib chaired Uruzgan's inaugural PDC meeting, with several provincial representatives of national ministries (Agriculture, Education, Public Works, RRD, Irrigation, Health, etc.) and the PRT participating. PRT officers and Monib described the PDC as a forum for forward-planning, to establish short- and long-term goals and then identify projects to meet those goals. Because this approach is new to Uruzgan's unsophisticated administrators, the PRT agreed to the Governor's request to hold workshops in planning and budgeting techniques in the coming days. The PDC will meet weekly for a while as it develops momentum and then will shift to a biweekly schedule. Monib appears fully

engaged.

¶6. (C) PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ON THE MEND: The PC is Uruzgan's only elected body, but is saddled with a president in dire need of coaching. It met a few times last year but is now dormant. Governor Monib told us he had tried to work with the PC a few times, but when he caught the president, Mullah Hamdullah, forging the Governor's signature on decrees, he ended the relationship. Monib feels that Hamdullah is prone to concocting unrealistic schemes, but is unwilling to do serious canvassing of Uruzgan's population or nuts-and-bolts project development.

¶7. (U) Monib is also looking to resolve a separate problem: during the PC elections in 2005, Uruzgan elders prevented women from running for office, so the PC's three seats reserved for women remain unfilled. As an interim solution, Governor Monib is searching for qualified women whom he will appoint to sit on the PC until the next elections. We are not certain this is strictly constitutional, but we fully support the move as a way to reenergize the Council and develop female leadership voices here. Monib has offered to share the appointees' names with us in advance and his first proposed name is a good one: Ms.

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Hillah, an educated and serious war widow, who runs a vocational school from her Tarin Kowt home. Once the women are seated, the PRT will host a re-inaugural meeting of the PC with an eye to making it an effective partner for Governor Monib.

¶8. (C) JAN MOHAMMED) THE INVISIBLE HAND: President Karzai appointed Monib in March to replace Jan Mohammed Khan, a corrupt warlord who governed Uruzgan for four unhappy years. Jan Mohammed is leader of one of the province's power tribes and, since his departure to take up a ministry job in Kabul, he has been an incessant thorn in the side of Governor Monib and the Coalition. We have credible reports that he is in contact with the Taliban here and orchestrating insurgent activities - reportedly trying to engineer his own return as governor by demonstrating that only he can stabilize Uruzgan. Jan Mohammed makes periodic trips to Uruzgan and Kandahar to meet with his tribal allies and inspect his poppy fields. He clearly feels he retains the support of President Karzai (a fellow Populzai with whom he has a long friendship); this week he directly challenged the Governor by walking into Monib's compound and announcing, "I can do anything I want here!" The Embassy continues to raise with President Karzai our concerns about Jan Mohammed's trouble-making and our hope that Karzai can rein him in.

¶9. (C) COMMENT) MONIB PUSHING THE ROCK UP THE HILL: Governor Monib is doing as well as can be expected. He is operating against a determined insurgency, a devious enemy in Jan Mohammed and a real threat of assassination, with limited resources and allies he can count on one hand. But he pushes on, strategizing his reforms, rebuking ministers who show up late for meetings, taking on most problems himself and approaching the PRT for support on the rest. He is eager to visit the outer districts and is receptive to the PRT's assistance projects - from Alternative Livelihood seed distribution to opening roads and bridges over the Helmand River and setting up radio stations in district capitals. With the imminent arrival of a new ANP unit and the kickoff of Operation Mountain Thrust, we are hopeful that Uruzgan can be stabilized to the extent that assistance projects, coupled with Monib's determination to find allies among the tribes, can help him get some traction. He listens to advice and has a long-term view; he sees the practical value in investing time to create the Development Council and strengthen the PC. Governor Monib is active, but his dearth of local allies demonstrates that nobody here is yet picking him as the winner. END COMMENT.

¶10. (C) Tarin Kowt PRT Commander has reviewed this cable.

